
Appropriations Committee

HB 1055

Brief Description: Concerning public safety employees' retirement plan membership for public safety telecommunicators.

Sponsors: Representatives Stokesbary, Ormsby, Leavitt, Simmons, Goodman, Lekanoff, Rule, Robertson, Bronoske, Bergquist and Davis; by request of Select Committee on Pension Policy.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Adds individuals who are members of the Public Employees' Retirement System Plans 2 and 3, and whose primary responsibility is to respond and process 911 emergency calls for law enforcement, fire, medical, or other public safety services to the Public Safety Employees' Retirement System.

Hearing Date: 1/16/23

Staff: David Pringle (786-7310).

Background:

The Public Safety Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) was created in 2004 and opened to members on July 1, 2006. The PSERS provides retirement benefits for state and local government employees who work in positions with law enforcement and correctional duties but are not eligible for membership in the Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Retirement System (LEOFF), as well as employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Social and Health Services that provide nursing care to, or ensure the custody or safety of, offender and patient populations in state institutions.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Members of the PSERS with at least 20 years of service will be eligible for full retirement benefits from age 60, five years earlier than the regular retirement age in Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) Plans 2 and 3. Members of the PSERS with 20 years of service may also opt for early retirement beginning at age 53 with a 3 percent reduction in benefits per year of early retirement. Members of PSERS also have disability benefits similar to LEOFF, rather than PERS.

Membership in the PSERS is restricted by an individual's employer and by specific job criteria. The PSERS employers are defined as the departments of Corrections, Natural Resources, Social and Health Services, Veterans Affairs, the State Parks and Recreation Commission, Gambling Commission, Washington State Patrol, Liquor and Cannabis Board, county corrections departments, and the corrections departments of municipalities not classified as first-class cities.

Summary of Bill:

Individuals who are members of the PERS Plans 2 and 3, and whose primary responsibility is to respond and process 911 emergency calls for law enforcement, fire, medical, or other public safety services are added to employees eligible to participate in PSERS.

Eligible employers are defined as those that participate in the PERS system, and some of whose employees' primary responsibility is to receive, process, transmit, or dispatch 911 emergency and nonemergency calls.

For eligible employees employed on June 1, 2024, a window of time between January 1, 2024 and March 1, 2024 is provided for the person to elect to remain a member of PERS 2 or 3, or transfer to PSERS for periods of future service. If a member does not choose to transfer to PSERS, they remain in PERS. Members hired on or after June 1, 2024 become members of PSERS.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on June 1, 2024.